

HARPENDEN RURAL PARISH COUNCIL
HERTFORDSHIRE

Minutes of the Annual meeting of the Parish Council held at St Mary's Church, Kinsbourne Green on Tuesday 28 May 2024 starting at 7.00pm

Present: Parish Councillors Sheffield (Chair), Crispin, Randall and Ring.
Also in attendance: Andrew Reading (Parish Clerk). Councillor Ed Moore.

40/2024 Appointment of Chair

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Sheffield be appointed Chair of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. Her acceptance of office was received.

41/2024 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

It was RESOLVED that Councillor Ring be appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council for the ensuing year. His acceptance of office was received.

42/2024 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Sheffield declared an interest as a Trustee of The Friends of Kinsbourne Green

43/2024 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 were approved.

44/2024 Matters arising

Minute 36/24 – Storage Units on land north of Kinsbourne Green Common.

The Chair reported that since the last meeting, gates had been installed at the entrance to this land. However, it did not appear that this was an infringement of the covenant. It was agreed that the situation there be monitored on an informal basis.

45/2024 Resignation of John Holder and co-option to the Parish Council

The Clerk reported that John Holder had resigned as a parish councillor on 29th March 2024. The resulting vacancy had been notified to the District Council and had been publicised in accordance with statutory requirements. No response had been received and so the Parish Council was now free to co-opt.

It was RESOLVED that Ed Moore be co-opted to the Parish Council with immediate effect until the next Parish elections in 2027. His acceptance of office was received.

46/2024 Internal Audit Report 2023/24

The Internal Audit Report, as prepared by Alex Sage, was received and it was noted that there were no issues of concern that had been raised during the audit of the 2023/24 financial statements.

The audit work was carried out pro bono, but as per the budget, a gift of wine had been made in lieu of payment. The Audit Report, together with other accounting information, would be published on the Parish Council's website in the coming weeks.

47/2024 Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts 2023/34

The Clerk said that the summary receipts and payments accounts and balance sheet did not contain anything unexpected. The balance carried forward on 31 March 2024 was £3,100 more than the balance brought forward on 1 April 2023. This was because the category three tree works had not taken place during the financial year. The invoice for the 2023/24 dog waste collection costs had been received after the year end and so would fall in the 2024/25 financial year. The two significant variances were the increase in the precept of c 50% to cover tree work on the triangle of common land, and an increase in the Clerk's salary of c 16% which was made up of a national salary award on 7.1% together with additional hours of work.

It was RESOLVED that subject to the correction of the carry forward date on the Balance Sheet from 31/03/2023 to 31/03/2024, the Accounts of Harpenden Rural Parish Council for the year ended 31 March 2024 be approved, and that the Chair be authorised to sign the Summary Receipts and Payments Accounts and Balance Sheet.

48/2024 Annual Governance Statement 2023/24

The Parish Council considered the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 contained in Section 1 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR). Each section of the statement was considered, and it was agreed that each point had been met, apart from point 9, which was not applicable.

It was RESOLVED that the Annual Governance Statement 2023/24 be approved and signed by the Chair and Parish Clerk.

49/2024 Accounting Statements 2023/24

The Parish Council considered Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) – Accounting Statements 2023/24. It was noted that the amounts set out in this document had been extracted from the Receipts and Payments Account as discussed under minute 47/24.

It was RESOLVED that the Accounting Statements 2023/24 be approved and that the Chair be authorised to sign section 2 of the 2023/24 AGAR

50/2024 Certificate of Exemption from External Audit

The Clerk said that it was not necessary for the Parish Council undergo a limited assurance review by P K Littlejohn LLP, external auditors, as long as the Parish Council certified itself as exempt. There were a number of requirements for exemption, the main one being that both income and expenditure were less than £25,000. In addition, the Parish Council had to comply with the Transparency Code for Small Authorities by publishing certain financial information, including the Certificate of Exemption, on the Parish Council website by 1 July 2024. The Clerk confirmed that all the required accounting information would be published before that date.

It was RESOLVED that the Chair and Parish Clerk sign a certificate of exemption, AGAR 2023/24 Part 2, for submission to P K Littlejohn LLP, The External Auditors.

51/2024 Parish Council Insurance Renewal 2024/25

The Clerk said that in 2023/24 the Parish Council had switched to a web-based policy with Zurich Municipal, with an annual premium of £264, thereby saving c £80 on the previous policy with the same company, with no change to levels of cover. Zurich Municipal had again quoted £264 for 2024/25.

It was noted that this wasn't a bespoke policy and that premiums were based solely on the level of precept. The limit of indemnity for public liability was £12,000,000. The Clerk said that in the past he had advised Zurich Municipal that the Parish Council was responsible for a number of trees on the triangle of Common land it rented, and as a consequence the Parish Council had instigated annual tree condition surveys, carrying out any works recommended. Recent focus on a supplementary tenancy agreement signed by the Parish Council in 1966 raised uncertainties regarding the maintenance and insurance of trees around the perimeter of the common. This would need to be resolved as soon as possible.

It was RESOLVED that the web-based insurance policy with Zurich Municipal be renewed from 1 June 2024 for a further year, at a cost of £264.

52/2024 Schedule of Payments and review of expenditure v budget

The Clerk said that the Parish Council was only a few weeks into the new financial year and so there was very little to report. The cost of the dog waste collection for 2023/24 via the District Council's contract with John O'Connor grounds maintenance, had come in over budget by £64. However, the cost was still considerably cheaper than the Parish Council's previous contractor.

The following payments were approved.

Payments 6 March 2024 to 28 May 2024		
(i)	Clerk salary January to March 2024	620.67
(ii)	HMRC tax on salary January to March 2024	414.40
(iii)	TP Jones and Company. Payroll services January to March 2024	19.50
(iv)	Clerk expenses January to March 2024 (Working from home allowance September to March £75. Print cartridge £28.98. Computer mouse £12.99. Milage £20.25)	137.22
(v)	Open Spaces Society subscription 2024/25	45.00
(vi)	Training course for Chair	30.00
(vii)	St Albans District Council dog waste collection 2023/24	513.60
(viii)	Room hire 28 May 2024	25.00
(ix)	Clerk expenses April to May 2024 (Gift for auditor £67.09. Print cartridge £27.98. Milage £15.75)	110.82
(x)	Mobile costs April – June 2024	9.00

53/2024 Kinsbourne Green Common

It was noted that there were two issues that would require consideration by the Parish Council. The first was the supplementary tenancy agreement entered into by the Parish Council in 1966, and the second was a more specific matter relating to the boundary of the Common. It was agreed that the Chair of the Friends of Kinsbourne Green be invited to attend a special meeting

of the Parish Council along with Kevin Moore from the Rights of Way Team, Hertfordshire County Council.

It was RESOLVED that a special meeting of the Parish Council be held on Monday 17 June 2024 at 7.00pm

54/2024 Parish Council newsletter and photography competition

The Chair circulated an updated draft of the second edition of the Parish Council newsletter together with draft terms and conditions for the proposed photography competition.

It was noted that the newsletter was almost in final form, with a number of small queries having been resolved together with checks for copyright. Councillor Sheffield said it was important to get it printed and distributed fairly quickly, so that residents had as much notice as possible of the forthcoming fete on Kinsbourne Green Common. It was agreed that (a) the newsletter be updated with a line about recent burglaries in the area and urging people to be vigilant, and (b) that the Parish Council would provide a £10 book token for each of the three category winners in the upcoming photography competition. A final version would be circulated for comment after the meeting.

The Chair then circulated some draft terms and conditions for the photography competition which were based on those from a similar competition. A number of suggestions were made to amend the draft. This included removal of the sentence relating to social media, tighter wording on the use of digital enhancements of photographs, with reference being made to the fact that Artificial intelligence to generate or alter a photograph was prohibited.

It was AGREED that the suggested changes be incorporated into the draft Terms and Conditions and that the Chair circulated a revised version.

55/2024 Planning applications and decisions 1 March to 1 May 2024

The Parish Council considered a schedule of planning applications and decisions covering the two-month period to 1 May 2024. In particular it was noted that there were six planning appeals pending in respect of Pollards Farm, The Common.

56/2024 Parish Council website

Councillor Crispin circulated a schedule showing the current Parish Council website layout together with a proposal for a new website layout that would be clearer and more intuitive. This would signpost help for issues that were not the responsibility of the Parish Council and include, among other changes, information about the Friends of Kinsbourne Green and a link to planning information rather than, the current manually updated list.

The Parish Council was very supportive of this proposal and thanked Councillor Crispin for taking on this task. The Parish Council would be kept updated on progress and would eventually be able to see a new draft website for comment, in advance of the existing website being discontinued.

57/2024 Financial Regulations

The Clerk said that as the National Association of Local Councils had recently updated its Model Financial Regulations, it would make sense for the Parish Council to defer consideration of its own Financial Regulations to a future meeting to allow for them to be updated in accordance with the new Model Regulations. This was AGREED.

58/2024 Bank Mandate Changes

The Clerk circulated a form for signature to add Councillor Crispin as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank account. He also proposed that Councillor Moore be added, and that John Holder be removed as a signatory.

It was RESOLVED that

- (i) Councillor Moore be added as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank accounts
- (ii) John Holder be removed as a signatory on the Parish Council's bank accounts

59/2024 St Albans and District Association of Local Councils (SADALC)

The Clerk said that the SADALC comprised representatives of all the Parish Councils in the St Albans District, together with the Town Council. It met four times a year and was usually attended by a representative from the District Council. As a forum it enabled information sharing between the local councils. John Holder had previously been the HRPC representative. Councillor Ring said that he would be willing to attend future meetings as the Parish Council's representative and the Clerk said he would notify the Association and advise Councillor Ring of the next meeting date.

60/2024 London Luton Airport

The Chair said that John Holder had taken a keen interest in the proposals to develop London Luton Airport and had kept the Parish Council updated. Councillor Moore said that he was a representative on the Luton Airport Consultative Committee and would be able to provide updates to each parish council meeting. It was noted that Harpenden Rural Parish Council was not currently represented on the Luton Airport Consultative Committee.

61/2024 Fly tipping

Councillor Moore said that he had reported four fly tips in Kennel Lane. Two fixed penalty notices had been issued recently.

62/2024 Date of next meeting

It was agreed that the next meetings be held as follows

Special meeting - Monday 17 June 2024

Scheduled meeting - Monday 16 September 2024

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.20pm

Clerk to the Council

Chair